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ZRT split on Prez

In a move seen as "seismic" in the history of the Talossan Republic, President Ián Anglatzarâ has failed to gain the undisputed support of the ZRT, the party he co-founded, in his bid for re-election.

A conclave of the ZRT membership failed to come to a consensus on the Presidential election, it was announced yesterday. All ZRT members would be entitled to campaign for "whichever candidate most pleased them", according to an official statement.

This shocking turn of events has come about as the Republic reels from another episode of rampant apathy. While the ZRT majority in the Chamber of Deputies has done its best to keep the ball rolling - having, as ZRT Chamber fraction leader Txec dal Mar put it, done more work than the last Chamber within the first half of its term alone - the Government has been slothful at best. Seneschál Eiric Börnatfiglheu, a former Peculiarist bigwig now backed by the ZRT majority, has been hampered by all manner of extra-Talossan affairs, and the rest of the Government could be described as "somnolent" at best. With no new citizens having joined the Republic for the better part of a year, some are talking of crisis.

Into the breach has stepped D. N. Vercáriâ, former President, former Seneschál, former High Court Justice, and former Peculiarist. The last term is used advisedly, because Vercáriâ's campaign for President has (as ZRT co-founder Miestrâ Schivâ has pointed out) happily thrown away the laissez-faire, small-government principles that once held the MRP together as the Republic's

biggest party. "Dieter seems to have discovered that Talossa needs the smack of firm government. Good for him," said Schivâ, who as Secretary of State is barred by convention from actively campaigning in thelection.

Ián Anglatzarâ was elected on the ZRT banner last election (in opposition to another ZRT candidate!) but has, in practice, accelerated in the opposite direction to his opponent. While Vercáriâ talks of using the Presidency as a lever to fast-track cultural development through a series of nationalisations, Anglatzarâ has promised to continue his light-handed style and not intervene into the day-to-day practice of government. Word has it that it is this that has disgruntled a section of opinion within the ZRT.

"Ián's a great person, a great Talossan, a true hero of the Republic, and a very good friend," says a ZRT member on condition of anonymity. "But I don't think Talossa can afford to have any active citizens in



Has the Prez blown it?

ceremonial roles at the moment - we need every citizen as active as they can get!"

Rumour has it, based on early returns at the Secretary of State's office, that the Presidential election is "neck and neck", and the concurrent referendum to "re-annex" the historical northern provinces of Talossa is "even closer".

"I won't turn off the lights"

QATOR ITRÌNS interviews D. N. Vercáriâ

QI: Let's start off with the big one. Is the Talossan Republic doomed?

DNV: I hope it's not. I think if we don't get pessimistic and lethargic just because of a stagnant immigration rate, we can still achieve more than withering away in the Polyphonian way. If I didn't believe that the Republic has a future, I wouldn't stand in this election, because, frankly, I don't want to be the President who will have to turn off the lights in an abandoned, ramshackle house.

QI: You have put up a radical proposal

for, essentially, nationalising non-performing private cultural initiatives (such as Radio Free Talossa) and running them with political appointees. Let's be concrete about this. Say that a government chaired by yourself nationalised Radio Free Talossa. What would you see actually happen? Who would take over running it? What procedures would exist to make sure they did their job?

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QI vs. Vercáriâ

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DNV: The basic idea is, that the Republic had its best times when almost everyone was eager to participate in the process of building up a brandnew, shiny, better Talossa. I think a part of our problems is that we actually don't know what to do with and in our Republic. Designing and building up the structures of national cultural institutions, which may actually have an output that is perceivable in an immediate sensual way, may be a challenge that brings back a lot of the old beat.

QI: You have said that "every active Talossan should have a job". But would this necessarily make anyone more active? Certain Deputies or Government Ministers don't seem to do very much, not to mention the esteemed High Court. Do you see a role for the Government in picking people for jobs, or will people still choose their own ways to participate?

DNV: Ideally, they should choose their own ways, but every so often I've been asked "what can I do for the Republic? There seems to be nothing that actually could

be done...". I don't think, that people must be forced into roles that don't fit anyway; and if a citizen gets inactive due to a busy "real life", we sure can't and shouldn't force this citizen into a job for which he or she hasn't got the necessary spare time. But if we see that there are citizens who are seeking for something to do for the Republic, we should help them. Looking back, I think we failed to integrate the creativity of, e.g., Antonio Lixhita, so that when his projects didn't get even a minimal applause he chose to leave the Republic in a huff. A wise government could try to integrate citizens who are desperately willing to contribute to our society, but don't find a solution quickly.

QI: Your opponent, outgoing President Anglatzarâ, thinks that el Prüm Citaxhiên dâl Repúblicâ should be a ceremonial post, like the German Bundespräsident. You on the other hand have an activist agenda, or so it seems. Do you foresee any conflicts with the rest of the Government, especially Seneschál Börnattfiglheu, if you're elected? When Seneschál and Prez disagree, who will have to give way?

DNV: Prüm Citaxhien means "first citizen", not "first bulldog".

QUOTAZIUN

"I disagree with your continued existence." - a citizen of John Woolley's "Kingdom of Talossa" shows a distressing lack of insight as to why he's not more popular in the liberated provinces.



The "bass" of a successful campaign?

And of course the Constitution is limiting the powers of the President. Passing laws is the job of the Parliament, in case of an unresolvable conflict between the President and the CoD a pending law is quickly taken to a referendum. If the President and the Seneschál disagree, there is still the rest of the government to help them to find a way to a compromise. And no, I don't foresee unsolvable conflicts with Seneschál Börnattfiglheu.

QI: Some voters say that, while they like your platform for this election, your performance as President in 2006-7 has left a sour taste in their mouths. What would you say to them?

DNV: It's up to every single one of you to decide if you can dare to vote for me. As the Romans used to say, times are changing and we are changing within times. In the beginning of my first term I would have agreed with Ian Anglatzarâ that our President should mainly act as a ceremonial head of the state. I may agree with

this again, once we'll have a population of at least 25 active citizens who are struggling for jobs in which they can shape our society. As for me, I've been a somewhat active and integrative Seneschál in the mean time, so what you've seen is what you can possibly get. Again, you decide.

QI: If you lose the election, will you seek a nomination to Cabinet to carry out your platform?

DNV: Empirically, from mid June to the end of August the Republic is going on summer vacation. So if I lose the election, I will applaud Ián and wish him a successful second term, as our first winner of a consecutive term in the office of the President. Then, without any regrets, I hopefully will enjoy the long short European summer, before I may run for a seat in the next CoD.